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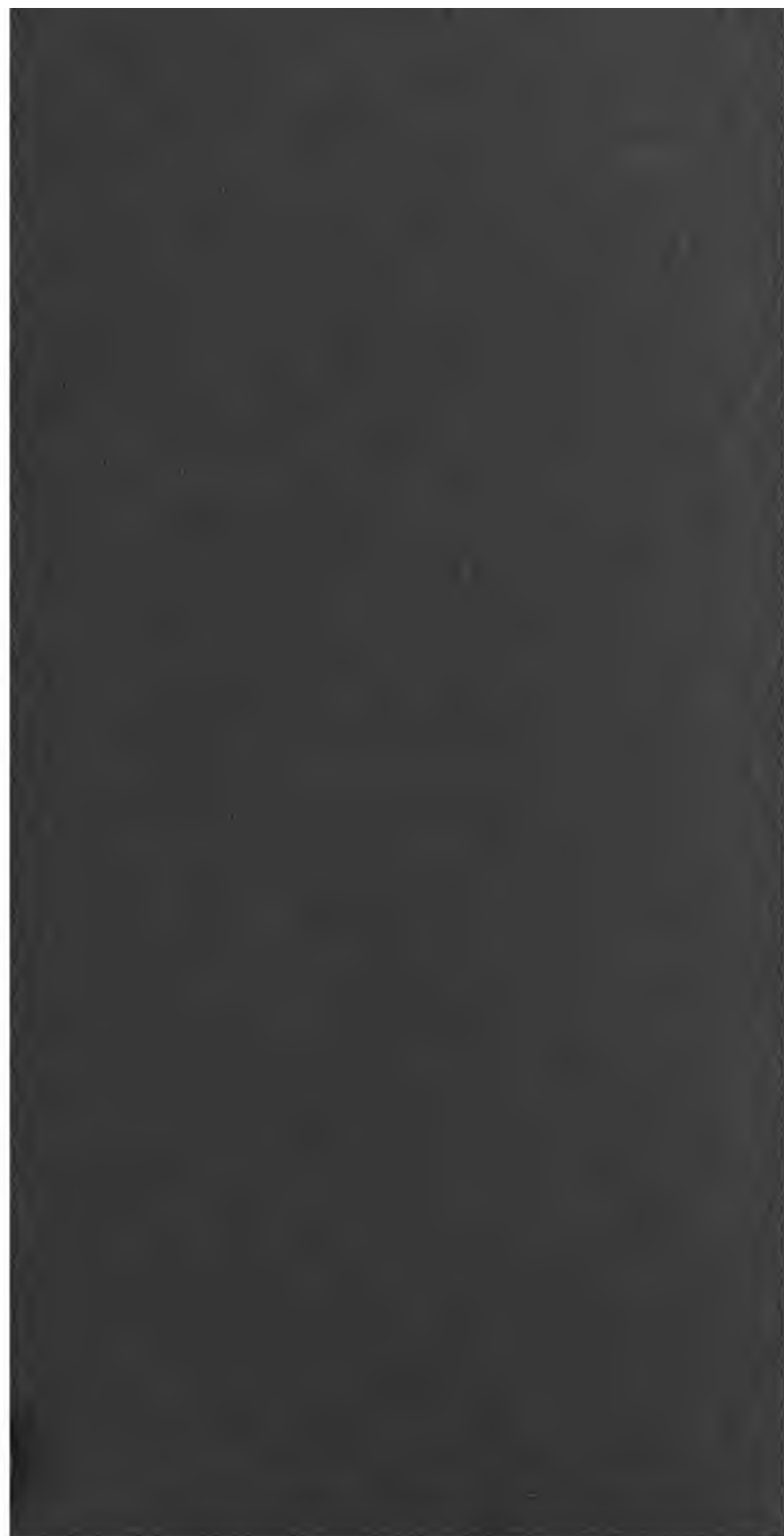


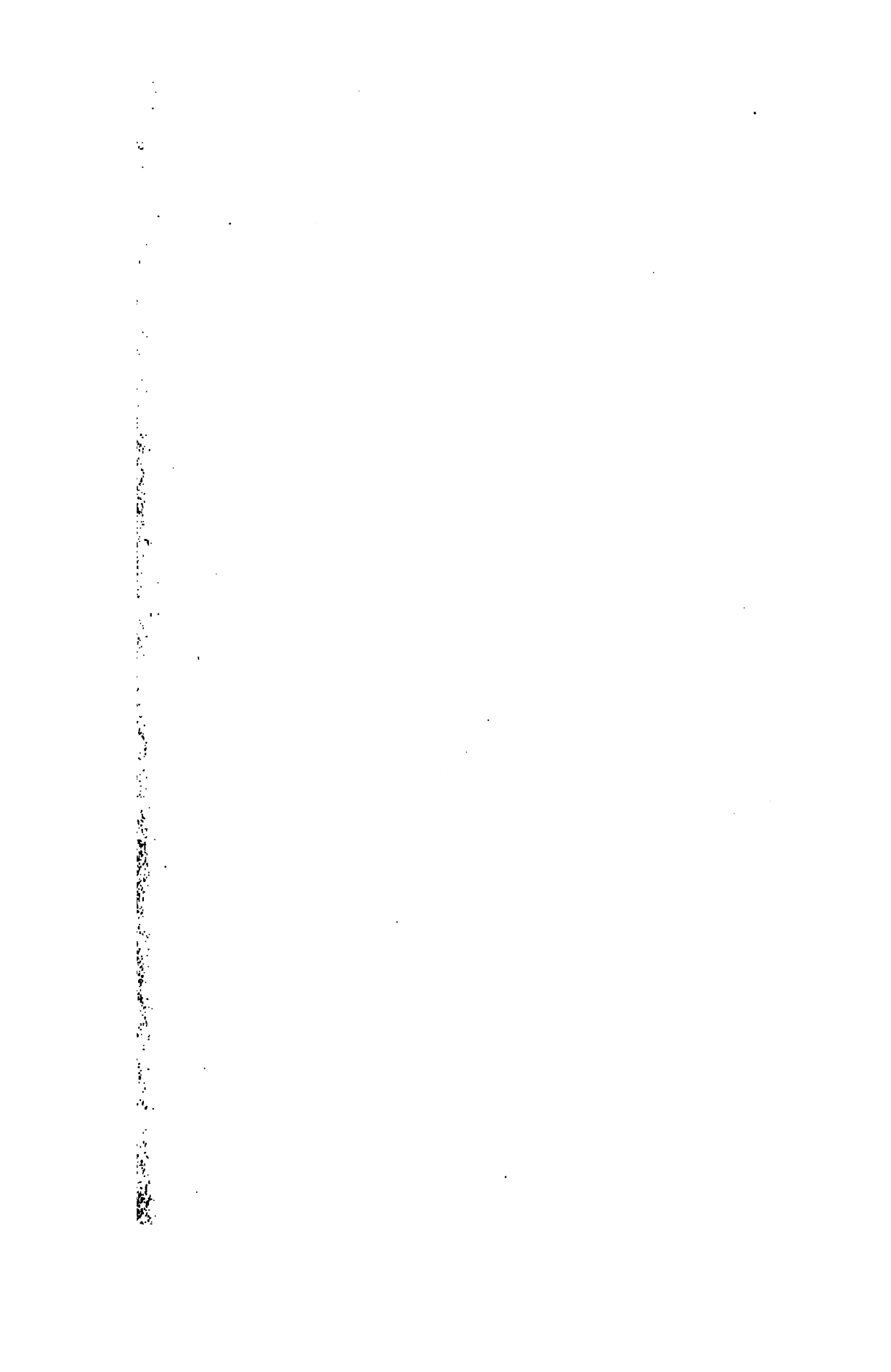
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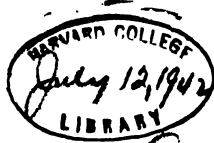
AN
HISTORICAL ADDRESS
DELIVERED AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE INCORPORATION OF THE
TOWN OF NAHANT
JULY 14, 1903
BY
HENRY CABOT LODGE



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Byington A. Beal

D. B. UPDIKE, THE MERRYMOUNT PRESS, BOSTON

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TIME and space are infinite and they make man restless and uneasy, because he is himself essentially limited and ephemeral. Therefore is he perpetually striving by dividing and measuring in an arbitrary manner to bring the infinite in which he lives within the grasp of his own finite conception. He finds comfort in stating in his own terms the distance of the sun and the fixed stars from the earth, although the figures bring him no nearer to a real sense of the unseen spaces where other systems circle other suns. In like fashion he divides recorded time, although he cannot comprehend the length of the epochs geologists calculate for him, much less the measureless void which lies before and after. Even the brief period over which his own history extends outruns his imagination, yet its separation into divisions which are familiar to him is in a way soothing, and softens the awful consciousness of his solitary little figure, brief of life, a mere speck moving dimly across the infinities of space and time. So many revolutions of the earth make up the year with its seasons, so many years make up the century; and to the arbitrary period thus created by ourselves for our own convenience we have come to assign a significance which is accepted—such is the force of habit—as if it were part of the order of the universe.

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None the less it is well that men should agree that certain anniversaries shall be those chosen for celebration. It is a pleasant custom reaching back to the dim days of ancestor worship, and is founded on the sound faith that it is well to honour the dead past, and that a people who have no reverence for their own history will probably have neither present nor future worthy of remembrance. As the time lengthens the periods of celebration fall at wider intervals; but a community may well commemorate its first half century of existence as an independent organization with a civil life of its own.

It is for this reason that our town of Nahant has set apart this time and that we have gathered here to celebrate her fiftieth birthday. Yet although the town life goes back for only fifty years, the history of the men who have dwelt here, and who by their labours made a town possible, covers five times that period. Before the coming of the Puritans we have only vague indications to connect Nahant with human life which alone for us constitutes history. Arrow-heads and spear-points, as well as the recent discovery of Indian graves on the old Johnson estate, show that Indians came here, and prove that they also at one time had a permanent settlement on the peninsula. But that is all. The chipped flints and the mouldering skeletons are the only record left by the original possessors of the soil. The case is not so clear as to who the men of our race were who first set eyes upon Nahant, but I think that it may be fairly asserted that they were Norsemen, followers of Leif and Thorwald. A large and fanciful structure has been reared upon the vague and general statements of the Sagas which will hardly bear

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the weight of so much detail, involving as it does even the building of an elaborate town on the Charles River, near Cambridge. But that the Norsemen came as far south as Rhode Island seems reasonably certain. The long boats of the Vikings must at that time have passed East Point, and it is not beyond the bounds of fair conjecture to identify Nahant with one of the most striking scenes of the old tales. Thorwald, who came after Leif Ericson, on his return passed by the point of Cape Kiarlanes or Keel Cape, which is considered to be Cape Cod, and thence steering westward came to a bold promontory stretching out into the sea. There he anchored and there he was attacked by the Skrellings, as the Norsemen called the natives. They beat off the red men, inflicting heavy loss upon them, but in the fight Thorwald was killed. On the rocky promontory he was buried, and the point was named Cape Krosanes. This identification of the places mentioned in the Sagas is largely guesswork, but we have fair ground to suppose that Thorwald, one of the old Norse fighters, lies buried somewhere on Nahant. There is this advantage at least in our legend, that there is no one able to disprove the story, and it is pleasant, I think, to connect, if only in imagination, our rocky peninsula with the last fight of one of the Northern Vikings.

Five hundred years elapsed after the passing of the Norsemen before the coast of New England was again looked upon by men of our own race. Then began the era of the discoverers: the Cabots first, and following them, with constantly lessening intervals, the bold explorers in search of a Northwest passage; hardy fishermen from England and from Brittany; adventurers looking for an

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El Dorado; Captain John Smith of Virginia fame, who made a map of the coast; and Gosnold and his companions, who wintered on Cuttyhunk, and brought home reports from which perhaps Shakespeare drew the scenery of "The Tempest." At last, nearly one hundred and twenty-five years after the famous voyage of the Cabots, the Mayflower dropped anchor in Plymouth harbour and permanent English settlement began. The establishment almost at the same time of the fishing station at Cape Ann must have made Nahant a familiar landmark to the fishermen and traders who plied between Plymouth and the Northern Cape, but nearly eight years passed before this promontory had any other meaning. Then in 1629-1630 the great Puritan immigration began and Nahant comes fairly within the range of historical record.

In the second year of the Puritan coming, Isaac Johnson, who arrived with Winthrop, and whose wife was the Lady Arbella, daughter of the Earl of Lincoln, took up land by arrangement with the Indians at Saugus, and his servants kept the cattle on Nahant for "some space of time." Both Isaac Johnson and his wife died in Boston during the first severe year of the settlement, but others had already come to the same region and the town of Lynn was founded, the planters selecting the most favoured spots, often widely separated, for their farms and houses. In 1630 Thomas Dexter, a farmer, purchased Nahant from the Indian sagamore for a suit of clothes or a pair of breeches. The transaction never seemed to me to be a very happy selection for the town seal, especially as Dexter's title was denied from the start by the town of Lynn, which prevailed after a stubborn contest, lasting

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nearly thirty years, and we hear of Dexter only in connection with this lawsuit and in certain other legal records less innocent than the Registry of Deeds, but never as the owner of Nahant. In fact Lynn controlled the peninsula from the outset, and the natural conformation of the land made it particularly valuable for the purpose to which Johnson's servants had first put it. By simply building a fence across the Long Beach, cattle could be kept in and wolves kept out, an arrangement greatly to the convenience of the settlers. So important indeed did this seem to the Lynn farmers that in 1634 the militia or train band of the town was ordered out to clear the wolves off Nahant, and thus make it entirely safe for pasture. Nahant being thickly wooded, the town also tried to encourage settlement here by offering land to any one who would clear it. This scheme, obviously, worked only too well, for not long after the original offer we find the town limiting strictly the cutting of trees on Nahant. But the mischief had been done, the cutting went on, and the destruction of the forest, accompanied by the pasturing of sheep and cattle, soon stripped the peninsula and left it totally bare and exposed, until the tree-planting of recent times has through many difficulties made good in part the original spoliation. During the seventeenth century, therefore, Nahant was used by the townspeople of Lynn, either in common or under town grants, for the purposes of pasture. Some few persons, however, established themselves here in permanency. Before 1650 Thomas Graves and Hugh Alley appear to have had houses and farms here, the latter apparently living on the lower part of what is now the estate of Mr. Frederick Sears, near what was

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known then and later as the Hope Well. Other early settlers were the Lambert brothers, a family named Fferne, and another named Lindsay. By marriage with the children of these families other names appear in connection with Nahant during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the newcomers did no more than replace those who, wearying of the isolation of the place, moved away to the mainland. The population, therefore, engaged in fishing and farming, would seem to have remained practically stationary during the eighteenth century.

When the new century began there were only three families on Nahant, the Breeds, Hoods and Johnsons,—the first two being farmers, the last fishermen. Among them they owned practically all the land, but the fishing and farming did not offer support for an increased population. The little outlying settlement seemed to be at a standstill, and progress and growth to have ceased definitely; yet in reality Nahant was even then on the eve of the new development which was to fix its future character and bring it wealth and prosperity.

In the colonial days the people of the Thirteen Colonies were a hard-working race, with little leisure and less money. Where their homes were, there they dwelt all the year round. Travel was slow, difficult and expensive, and no one thought of such a thing as a trip to the seashore or the mountain-side merely for rest and recreation in the summer. The rich people—and they were few in number—existed only in the larger towns, and all alike, rich and poor and well-to-do, lived much in the same way, were very busy and travelled little. The out of town amusements of which we hear in the colonial times were con-

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fined to excursions up or down the rivers in the neighbourhood of New York, Philadelphia or Boston, and rarely involved an expedition into the country or along the shore which could not be covered in one day. Then came the Revolution, which banished all thoughts of pleasure and amusement and absorbed the strength and resources of the people. Bostonians were fully occupied in rebuilding and repairing their city, which had been nearly ruined by the siege, and had neither time nor money for the lighter side of life. After the storm of war had passed, the country was left poor and distracted. Debts had accumulated, property had been destroyed, the States were cursed with irredeemable paper money, the national government of the Confederation was impotent and helpless, and the popular discontent in Massachusetts broke out in what was known as the Shays Rebellion. Then came the great movement which saved the country and resulted in the formation of the government of the United States. Under the strong administration of Washington and the brilliant financial policy of Hamilton, hope revived, confidence returned, the people awoke to their unrivalled opportunities, and prosperity advanced with leaps and bounds. Nowhere was the new government more ardently sustained, or its advantages more quickly felt, than in New England. We were then exclusively an agricultural and commercial people and trade was our source of wealth. Under the new auspices and the wise legislation of the national government commerce sprang forward. The ships of Salem and Boston and of every New England seaport multiplied rapidly and found their way into all quarters of the globe. Our vessels went not only along the old routes to the

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West Indies and to Europe, but penetrated to the Northwest coast for furs; prosecuted the whale fisheries in the Arctic and brought home rich cargoes from China, India and the Spice Islands. Then were laid the foundations of many fortunes in Massachusetts, and the large square brick houses built at that time, and still to be found in all our coast towns, testify to the success of the merchants and sea-captains of New England. With the revival of prosperity and the increasing wealth of the people, the desire and the opportunity for relaxation and amusement followed, as is ever the case. Men began to look about them for places where nature was attractive and where there was a chance for the sports and the freedom which men tied down to hard work and confinement in towns always crave.

Then it was that people in Boston and the surrounding towns began to turn their eyes to Nahant. The fact that Samuel Breed in 1738 took out an innkeeper's licence shows that even at that early date occasional visitors must have come here for one reason or another, but there was certainly no definite or considerable travel hither until the opening of the nineteenth century. Then started the movement toward the out of town life which in the course of a hundred years has assumed such huge proportions, and which has created countless summer resorts, built hotels and cottages everywhere in the mountains and by the sea, and set a very large part of the American population travelling somewhere during the hot weather. It is for this reason most interesting to consider the history of Nahant, for it was one of the first places, if not the very first, which saw the beginning of this great annual migra-

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tion as it is to-day, and which has been familiar with all its phases.

When the movement began here, about 1800 or a little later, Nahant was very different from what it is now. A rough road wound its way from the Short Beach to what was for many years Whitney's Hotel. One or two other roads, mere cart tracks, descended to the south shore for the convenience of the fishermen. The Johnson home stood on what is now the Sigourney place. The Breeds lived in the house occupied by Mr. Kibbey, and Whitney's belonged to the Hoods. The boats were kept upon the southern side, and there too were the fish-houses and the flakes for drying fish. Such good land as existed in the hollows was cultivated, but the upland was nothing but treeless barren pasture, crossed here and there by rough stone division walls.

Tradition has it that the native inhabitants did not at first relish the coming of strangers, but if the feeling existed it soon disappeared, for it was found that there was more money to be made in caring for visitors and their wants than in the uncertain harvest of the sea and the meagre crops of the land. In a very short time every house on Nahant became a boarding-house and sought for the coming of strangers. Just at the beginning of the century, induced thereto by the increasing movement of pleasure-seekers, Joseph Johnson of Lynn built for hotel purposes the large house still standing beyond Fox Hill on the shore of Lynn Bay, and which has been known ever since by the name of "The Castle." The advertisement which he put forth to attract patronage has been preserved, and is worth quoting as an indication of the habits and phrases

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of a time when advertising had not become one of our principal national industries. It is as follows :

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“ JOSEPH JOHNSON informs the public in general and the valetudinarians and sportsmen in particular that he has reopened a House of Entertainment on the most delightful, pleasant, airy and healthy spot on Nahant, where he will be found ready furnished with every ‘good thing’ to cheer the heart, brace the frame, or to pamper the appetite. His house is commodious and neat—in the vicinity of the best fishing and bowling on the peninsula; and he keeps a neat sail-boat always afloat for the accommodation of his friends. To the other inducements he adds his respectful invitation; and while he will attend his guests with delight, he assures them that every favour shall be remembered with gratitude.

*“Friend to pastime, foe to care,
Come, enjoy our sports and fare!
Come, and stay a week or so—
But if uneasy, haste to go.’*

“Nahant, July 26, 1802”

In the years which followed, more and more people came to Nahant with each succeeding summer. The upland may have been treeless and barren and the modes of life primitive, but the air was fine and life-giving, and the ocean, always the same yet ever changing, broke in endless beauty upon the rugged cliffs so rich in form and colour. There were boating and sailing, abundant fishing, and in the season great flights of shore birds. Above all there were to be found here the ease and freedom so dear to the denizens of cities, and we can hardly realize now how great the change from Boston to Nahant then was. Time consumed has as large a part in creating distance and remote-

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ness as the number of miles. It took almost as long to go from Nahant to Boston in those days as it takes now to go from Boston to New York. Nahant could be reached only by sail-boat, involving a voyage of uncertain length, or by the road which then came round through Malden and Saugus; and if the tide were in the traveller was obliged to plough his way through the loose shingle over the two miles of the Long Beach. This difficulty of transit as a matter of fact probably added to the attraction. But in any event many people came; young men rode down with their guns and rods, others drove over in chaises, and others still came in sail-boats; the houses at Nahant were filled, and an active life became manifest on the little peninsula which had slumbered in all its natural beauty almost unnoticed since the days when the townspeople of Lynn first hunted wolves in the forest, and pastured cattle in the rock-strewn fields.

The movement thus begun rapidly assumed larger and larger proportions. More and more people travelled down from Boston; the older men also began to come, and having made the experiment soon arrived at the conclusion that with more comfortable arrangements this outlying point would be a pleasant place to live in. Nahant, in short, grew fashionable, and fashion brought improvement in its train. In 1817 a steamboat undertook to make trips to Nahant. Another ran in 1818, and in 1820 a regular route was established. This trip occupied three hours, but was a great advance in time and certainty over anything which had existed previously. A regular communication being thus established the next step was to supply something better than the accommodation which the farmhouses of the

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natives were able to offer. Accordingly in 1821 Colonel Thomas H. Perkins and William Paine bought East Point, then called the "Ram Pasture," from Nehemiah Breed, and there a hotel was built by a corporation organized in Boston. The hotel was an excellent and substantial building of stone, as was the billiard-room which was erected at the same time and which still remains unchanged. In all the company expended on the enterprise sixty thousand dollars, a very large sum of money for those days, and in 1823 the new hotel was opened to the public. Mr. George Ticknor, the historian of Spanish literature, in one of his letters alludes to going to Nahant in the summer of 1823 to stay at the new hotel. In 1825 Colonel Thomas H. Perkins built the first cottage, which still stands on the hill above the Spouting Horn, is still the property of his descendants, and is known to us all as the Carey House.

Thus Nahant was fairly started on its career as a watering-place and summer resort. Cottages multiplied after Colonel Perkins had set the example, and the hotel, although it passed through various business vicissitudes, coming finally into the hands of Mr. Phineas Drew in 1842, seems to have been popular and crowded. The people who frequented the hotel came chiefly from Boston, but there were many others from all parts of the country. Nahant and its hotel grew to be famous. Willis described the beauties of the scenery, and the rocky point, thrust out into the ocean like a mailed hand, became widely known. Many of the distinguished men of the day were habitual visitors, and their presence drew others. Webster came here in the height of his fame and down to the very year before his death. Choate, fresh from his triumphs at

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the bar; Bancroft, then at the beginning of his great history; William Story, afterwards to be known as sculptor and poet; Robert C. Winthrop, orator and author, Senator and Speaker of the House; Willis, whose reputation is now dim, but who then was at the zenith of literature in New York—were all among those who frequented the stone house with the wide verandas, and took part in the gayety which was inseparable from the life of that time in a summer hotel. But there were others still who, attracted by the air, by the beauties of the sea and sky and rocks, made here a more permanent residence, and one of greater independence and retirement than hotel life could afford. Judge Prescott, the son of Colonel Prescott who commanded the redoubt at Bunker Hill, built the cottage now owned by Mr. Bradlee, and he and his son, the eminent historian, lived here for more than twenty years. Charles Sumner, like most young men of his time a visitor at the hotel, continued until his death to come to Nahant every year and pass many weeks there with Longfellow and other friends. Motley, the brilliant historian of the Dutch Republic, like Sumner was one of those who came much to Nahant in the early days and never lost his affection for the scenes of his youth. Here he came whenever he returned from Europe, and here he spent the last summer he passed in this country and nearly the last of his life. Longfellow himself made his summer home here at an early day, and never ceased to come until his death, always accompanied in his latter years by his brother-in-law, Mr. Tom Appleton, wit, artist and man of letters, well remembered by many of us.

Longfellow was greatly attached to Nahant, and while

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he lived the name of Nahant was a household word wherever English poetry was read. It was from the piazza of his cottage that he looked out upon the splendid sunsets across the shining bay and wrote those lines so familiar to us all:

“O curfew of the setting sun! O Bells of Lynn!
O requiem of the dying day! O Bells of Lynn!

“From the dark belfries of yon cloud-cathedral wafted,
Your sounds aerial seem to float, O Bells of Lynn!

“Borne on the evening wind across the crimson twilight,
O'er land and sea they rise and fall, O Bells of Lynn!”

Some of his sonnets too are full of allusions to the voices and the beauties of the ocean which we all know and feel, and which the poet has put for us into the words of golden verse.

“The sea awoke at midnight from its sleep,
And round the pebbly beaches far and wide
I heard the first wave of the rising tide
Rush onward with uninterrupted sweep;
A voice out of the silence of the deep,
A sound mysteriously multiplied
As of a cataract from the mountain's side,
Or roar of winds upon a wooded steep.”

Again he writes:

“O summer day beside the joyous sea!
O summer day so wonderful and white,
So full of gladness and so full of pain!
Forever and forever shalt thou be
To some the gravestone of a dead delight,
To some the landmark of a new domain.”

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And yet again in a description of a scene as beautiful as it is familiar, although we gaze upon it so often with unthinking eyes:

“I saw the long line of the vacant shore,
The sea-weed and the shells upon the sand,
And the brown rocks left bare on every hand,
As if the ebbing tide would flow no more.
Then heard I, more distinctly than before,
The ocean breathe and its great breast expand,
And hurrying came on the defenseless land
The insurgent waters with tumultuous roar.”

But Longfellow was not the only poet to whom Nahant appealed, although he is more identified with it than any other. Dr. Holmes came here occasionally until he fixed his home upon the North Shore, and not only admired Nahant, but regarded it with the affection which all men of his time felt for the place because it was associated with the memories of youth, when Nahant was in the height of its renown, and when “pleasures and palaces” were neither so numerous nor so various as they are to-day. I remember very well standing with Dr. Holmes one beautiful afternoon at East Point, when the ocean, lying quiet in the summer haze, was just ruffled by the faintly moving air. As he looked he turned to me and quoted Tennyson’s great line from “The Eagle:”

“The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls,”

and said, “How perfect that is. Why did not I think of it first?” But none the less Dr. Holmes did not forget Nahant in his own verse, and in the poem telling the story of Agnes Surriage he wrote:

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“Nahant thrusts outward through the waves
Her arm of yellow sand,
And breaks the roaring surge that braves
The gauntlet on her hand;

“With eddying whirl the waters lock
Yon treeless mound forlorn,
The sharp-winged sea-fowl's breeding rock,
That fronts the Spouting Horn.”

It is to Whittier, however, the poet of Essex, who loved every corner of the old Puritan county, that we owe some of the best verses written about Nahant. You will, I know, permit me to recall them:

“Nahant, thy beach is beautiful!—
A dim line through the tossing waves,
Along whose verge the spectre gull
Her thin and snowy plumage laves—
What time the Summer's greenness lingers
Within thy sunned and sheltered nooks,
And the green vine with twining fingers
Creeps up and down thy hanging rocks!
Around—the blue and level main—
Above—a sunshine rich, as fell,
Bright'ning of old, with golden rain,
The isle Apollo loved so well!—
And far off, dim and beautiful
The snow-white sail and graceful hull,
Slow dipping to the billow's swell.
Bright spot!—The Isles of Greece may share
The flowery earth—the gentle air;—
The orange-bough may blossom well
In warm Bermuda's sunniest dell;—
But fairer shores and brighter waters,
Gazed on by purer, lovelier daughters,
Beneath the light of kindlier skies,
The wanderer to the farthest bound
Of peopled Earth hath never found
Than thine—New England's Paradise!”

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In prose Nahant was scarcely less fortunate. Long after Willis's description had begun to fade from men's minds, George William Curtis wrote an account of Nahant, one of the most charming of the essays in the volume called "Lotus Eating," and full of the grace and gentle sentiment so characteristic of the writer. More sober, but equally interesting, was the account written by Professor, afterward President, Felton of Harvard, who was much here in the days before the Civil War. His paper is especially valuable for it includes a report of the lecture upon the geology of Nahant given in the Town Hall by Agassiz, the great man of science, who lived among us beloved and honoured for so many years.

Research would no doubt disclose much more that was written of Nahant by other men of note, but enough has been quoted to show how large a place it filled in our American life during the past century, and how many memories of men whose names are fixed in our history, our literature, our science and our art are entwined with the annals of the town.

After fashion, as has been said, had set the seal of its approval upon Nahant, improvements and all the conveniences of life not only began to come in, but continued and increased from year to year. The road over the beach was begun in 1845 and was made strong and better with each succeeding season, while a post-office, two years later, ministered to the convenience of the inhabitants and connected the town with the national government. The sharp eyes of Mr. Paran Stevens, the most conspicuous of the successful hotel-keepers of that day, beholding these things, the idea came to him that he would make Nahant into a great

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watering-place. Accordingly, in 1852, with some associates he bought out Mr. Drew and converted the old square stone hotel, which was not without a certain picturesqueness of its own, into a vast wooden barracks many stories high and stretching from the billiard-room to the edge of the high bank on the East Point estate. Other wooden buildings, stables, bowling-alleys, and the like, for the most part unsightly, were scattered about in a quantity and size commensurate with the new hotel. A telegraph line was run across the beach to Lynn, and all that the resources of advertising could do for the new enterprise was done. Every sort of entertainment, hops and balls, bands and performers of all kinds, including Blondin, who walked on a tight rope stretched across the little bay between Castle Rock and the East Point shore opposite, were supplied as attractions. For a few years the new hotel had a factitious success. But Mr. Stevens had undertaken an impossible venture. Nahant, divided as it was from the country of woods and fields by three miles of beach and a growing manufacturing city, was too small and too remote from the mainland ever to be a great watering-place. She could not sustain so vast a scheme, and the panic of 1857, together with the gathering clouds of civil war, only served to hasten the inevitable catastrophe. Mr. Stevens was the first to hear the hand of fate knocking at the door. He disappeared quickly and adroitly from the scene, leaving his associates with the hotel and the mortgages. The business sank, the hotel was closed, and finally in September, 1861, it caught fire, as empty mortgaged buildings sometimes do, and after making a most magnificent blaze for the benefit of onlookers along miles of coast, was burned to the

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ground. Then the estate was sold, and passed finally into private hands.

Thus the hotel period came to an end. But the history of Nahant in this respect does not differ from the general course of development in other places. Wherever the cottage comes and prospers, the big hotel, with which almost all our summer resorts began, declines or altogether goes out. Such has been the case at Newport and Bar Harbor and all along the North Shore. Where the hotel has continued there are few or no cottages, but where the cottage, the separate private house, thrives and multiplies, the hotel life withers. The two forms, as experience shows, do not prosper on a large scale together. So it may be said that the big hotel period ended at Nahant as it has since done elsewhere, only in a more sudden and spectacular fashion, but the result in some manner was inevitable. With the destruction of the hotel and after the period of depression caused by the Civil War had passed, Nahant took on the form with which we are familiar, and has grown gradually along these lines to be what it is to-day.

Meantime, however, the town itself and its permanent inhabitants, stationary in numbers at the beginning of the century, had increased. The large accession of summer population with their many wants had brought money to the village and opened new channels of business, new opportunities for employment, and had created a steady demand for labor. Nahant's interests, too, had become wholly her own and quite distinct from those of Lynn, of which it had so long been a part. Small as the village was both in area and population the conditions which had grown up demanded an independent existence. So the usual for-

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malities and the necessary agitation having been gone through, Nahant became a separate body politic and an independent town just fifty years ago.

This is the event we commemorate. But our commemoration is not of the mere act of town organization, a far from uncommon occurrence in New England. That which we celebrate is the larger fact that men and women of our race, our forerunners here, had wrested the land from the wilderness, held it through much hardship for a hundred and fifty years, and then aided by the generous gifts of nature, bountiful in beauty if not in fertile soil or wealth of mines, had built up a town and were able to establish a town government which they have carried on in peace, prosperity and honour for half a century. We have a right I think to be proud of our town government, for it has been well managed; upright and able men have been chosen and retained in office, and the roads, the water, the lighting, the library, the good order maintained, all tell the story of wise and honest administration and of an intelligent people upon whom ultimately the burden rests and from whom the character of the government must be derived. For this New England town government, of which Nahant is such an admirable example, is the purest democracy which has existed or is known to the world to-day. Puritan Englishmen reverting unconsciously to many of the forms which their remote ancestors had brought from the German forests established them in the New World, and made the town and the town meeting the foundations of American democracy. The idea was of ancient descent, reaching far back beyond the emergence of the German tribes. The Greeks in the Agora, the Romans in the Forum,

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however much they may have alternated with tyrannies or military dictatorships, based their political system on the meeting of all the voters of the city as the ultimate power in government. But they were never able to carry the system further than the municipality itself. Hence the failure of the Greeks ever to build up a great empire, or pass beyond the stage of petty states and rival cities. Hence the breakdown of the Roman Republic and the substitution of the despotic emperor ruling autocratically a vast empire which, when its hour came, displayed in its downfall the utter lack of real cohesion among the various parts. To the English-speaking people it was reserved to add to the system of government by the citizens in public meeting the principle of representation which at once lifted direct government by the people from the confinement of the city or town and made it applicable to great states. It is this principle of representation in Parliament and Congress and in local colonial assemblies or state legislatures which has built up the British Empire, which has created the states of the American Union, and which has made our national government not only possible but able to rule over a continent. No longer imprisoned in the narrow boundaries of a municipality men learned to feel that they had larger duties and a nobler loyalty than to their own town. They widened their allegiance to take in first the state and then the nation. So it came to pass that no town, however small, failed to feel the broader patriotism which covered the entire country. They learned to be Americans first of all, and when the hour of stress and peril came they answered to the call. The mysterious chords of which Lincoln spoke vibrated to his touch throughout the land,

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and here in our own little town the men bred in town meeting sent forty-two of their number, five more than the quota, into the navy and army of the United States. That is a record of which the town may be rightly proud when much else has faded, for it shows that when the supreme test was made, there was neither failure nor faint-heartedness.

We have built up no great industries here, we have attained to no commercial greatness. For such things there has been no opportunity. But by those who have gone before this little space of earth has been conquered from the wilderness and dedicated to civilization and to the uses of man—no slight feat wherever accomplished. Nahant is rich too in memories of men who have influenced human thought. Remembrance will always cling to the paths which they trod on earth and to places where they lived and labored. Nahant has been described in the prose of Willis and Curtis, it is enshrined in the verse of Whittier and Holmes and Longfellow, it is associated with the science of Agassiz and with the histories of Prescott and Motley. Few are the towns which have monuments like these, more imperishable than bronze or stone. But there is something yet more endearing than all else which leads us to commemorate our fifty years of town life. The changing and everlasting glories of sea and sky, the rocks with the ocean murmuring at their feet, the sense of vastness which encompasses us, all these great gifts of nature, here in the silences ages before the coming of man, are what hold the heart and touch the affections, more even than the memories of our own brief past. We can say of Nahant as Webster said of Dartmouth College: "It is a small col-

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lege, and yet, Sir, there are those who love it." Those who love Nahant feel toward it as the Roman poet felt toward his beloved Sirmio, like Nahant, a peninsula of cliffs and crags thrusting itself defiantly forth into the waters of one of the most beautiful of the Italian lakes.

"Paeninsularum, Sirmio, insularumque
Ocelle, quascumque in liquentibus stagnis
Marique vasto fert uterque Neptunus,
Quam te libenter quamque laetus in viso,
Vix mi ipse credens Thyniam atque Bithynos
Liquisse campos et videre te in tuto!
O quid solutis est beatius curis,
Cum mens onus reponit, ac peregrino
Labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum
Desideratoque acquiescimus lecto.
Hoc est quod unum est pro laboribus tantis.
Salve, o venusta Sirmio, atque ero gaude;
Gaudete vosque, o Libuae lacus undae;
Ridete, quidquid est domi cachinnorum."¹

¹ See the following page for translation of these lines.



TRANSLATION

BY GEORGE CABOT LODGE

“Sirmio, gem of Isles and of rock-bound peninsulas
Which on the clear lagoons or the infinite seas are
Borne up by Neptune—O with what longing and gladness
I, seeming scarce from the Thynian and the Bithynian
Meadows departed, stand here once more and behold thee!
Are not accustomed pleasures yet sweeter than all things:
Yea; when the mind from burdens reposes and, when the
Labors of travel ended, we come to our hearthstone
And on our bed so longed for we sink into slumber.
Here is the goal and gain for the labors accomplished!
Hail to thee, fruitful Sirmio, mayst thou rejoice, and
Also ye waves of the Libyan lake, be ye joyful;
Laugh, laugh loud, with whatever the house holds of laughter!”

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